



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

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FIFTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

14 April 2019

TONE 5/ Eothinon 2—Commemoration of our Righteous Mother Mary of Egypt. Apostles Aristarchos, Pudens and Trophymos of the Seventy; Martyr Thomais of Alexandria; New-martyr Demetrios of the Peloponnesos. St. Martin the Confessor, Pope of Rome (655). Martyrs Anthony, John and Eustathius of Vilnius (Lithuania—1347). Martyr Ardalion the Actor (4th c.). Martyr Azades the Eunuch and 1,000 Martyrs of Persia (ca. 341).

FIRST ANTIPHON

The light of Thy Face, O Lord, is marked upon us. Thou hast given a sign to those that fear Thee, so that they may flee from the bow! (R.:) Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast given an inheritance to those that fear Thy Name, O Lord. (R.:) Glory... Now and ever... (R.:)

SECOND ANTIPHON

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God; let us worship at His footstool! (R.:) Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, "Alleluia"! God, our King before the ages, has worked salvation in the midst of the earth. I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth. (R.:) Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son and Word of God ...)

AT THE LITTLE ENTRANCE

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ! Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we sing to Thee: "Alleluia"!

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 5): Let us believers praise and worship the Word; coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation. For, He took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh to suffer death; and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

TROPARION FOR ST. MARY OF EGYPT (Tone 8): Through thee, the divine likeness was securely preserved, O mother Mary; for thou didst carry the cross and follow Christ. By example and precept thou didst teach us to ignore the body, because it is perishable, and to attend to the concerns of the undying soul. Therefore, doth thy soul rejoice with the angels.

TROPARION OF ANTHONY THE GREAT (Russian): Like the zealous Elijah thou didst become, and followed John the Baptist in his upright ways. A dweller in the wilderness, thou didst steady the world by prayer. O Father Anthony, intercede with Christ our God for our souls' salvation.

ORDINARY KONTAKION (Tone 4): O protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the Creator most constant, O despise not the suppliant voices of those who have sinned; but be thou quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession, and speed thou to make supplication, thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: *Make your vows to the Lord our God, and perform them.
God is known in Judah; His Name is great in Israel.*

From the Epistle to the Hebrews

(Heb 9:11-14) **BRETHREN**: when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, then through a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Over the past few Sundays we have been reading about the Old Testament temple as foreshadowing the new covenant in Christ: He is both fully man and fully God, and as such is our perfect “bridge” to God, our true High Priest. Today we hear about the type of sacrifice He brought.

Like our churches, the Temple had two rooms: a larger one—the outer chamber or “holy place”— and a smaller one behind it—the inner chamber or “holy of holies” (similar to our altar room). The inner chamber was separated from the outer chamber through a heavy curtain (similar to our iconostasis). This structure of the Temple had deep symbolic meaning. The inner chamber, or “holy of holies,” represented the Glory of God, inaccessible to fallen humanity. However, at the time of Christ’s death on the cross, the curtain guarding the entrance to the inner chamber was torn from top to bottom. In short, we now have access to God (symbolically, we have gained admission into the inner chamber) because Jesus our high priest has entered into the presence of God *on our behalf*.

But the high priest, who entered the inner chamber once a year, on the Day of Atonement, would bring an animal sacrifice. What sort of sacrifice did Christ bring? Well, the answer to this question was given centuries before it actually happened by the prophet Isaiah: *All of us had wandered off like sheep; each of us had strayed off on his own path. But the Lord laid upon him [Christ] the sin of us all. Like a lamb led to the slaughter, like a sheep silent before the shearers, he was silent and opened not his mouth. He poured out his soul to death, he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for sinners.*

Our high priest comes before God on behalf of all humanity, just as the high priests of old would intercede for Israel; but rather than sacrifice a lamb—as a sign of repentance—our high priest offers *Himself* up; he pours *Himself* out, as He is the Lamb of God. At the Divine Liturgy, while the people are singing the Cherubic Hymn, the priest prays a long prayer that ends with these words: *O Christ our God, You are the one who offers and the one who is offered, the one who receives and the one who is distributed ...*

And Christ did not enter the Jerusalem Temple for a ritual offering, but entered “**a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands**”: He entered heaven (the very reality that the temple symbolized!) and opened for us direct access to God himself. This is why we can call God “Father,” counting ourselves children of God.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Holy Gospel according to Mark

(Mk 10:32-45) At that time Jesus took the twelve aside, and he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise." And James and John, the sons of Zebedee came forward and said to him, "Master, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus, said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be the slave of all. For the Son of man himself came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Today's Gospel offers a very unflattering portrait of the disciples of our Lord. James and John (two of the three closest disciples—the third one being Peter) decide to "cash in" on their status as friends of the Lord. **"We want you to do for us whatever we ask of you!"** More specifically, they want to share his divine glory. The problem with their request was that they imagined it to be about power and honor, about ruling over the entire world. And the other disciples, as soon as they find out, are immediately angry at the two. Why should James and John get ahead of everyone else?

The Gospel makes it clear that the demand and the entire disagreement are childish and embarrassing for the disciples. The Lord Himself very firmly chastises them: **"it shall not be so among you! Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be the slave of all. For the Son of man himself came not to be served but to serve!"** The glory of the Kingdom is not about ruling over others, but about service. The model is Christ himself.

Yet we should not oppose the Cross and the Glory: the Cross is the face of God's Glory in this world. In the Bible, "the Glory of God" refers to the very reality of the Living God as He makes Himself manifest in creation. And we know that, as fallen creatures, we have all sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God (Rom 3:23); we are all outside reality, pale shadows inhabiting a self-styled "reality" and "life" outside the only truly Existing One. Christ, the true Life and Lord of Glory, has come into this world to accomplish our restoration, our return into the fullness of divine Glory. Yet, in this fallen world, the Glory of God is wrapped in humility, dwells in poverty, suffers all manner of indignity, takes on the form of a slave and chooses freely to die our very death, and to descend into the utmost estrangement from God that we have devised for ourselves. The Passion of the Lord and His Cross: this is the face of God's Glory in this world. How foolish, then, to expect the Glory of God to manifest itself as political, military, or economic might.

Why does Saint Mark tell us this story about the disciples? Obviously, because the lesson Christ gave to James and John still applies to his readers. Think of the many times when appeal to God and faith is used to gain and exercise power, to coerce or manipulate others into submission. Note also that James and John make their move immediately after the Lord foretells His impending Passion (**"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; ... they will mock the Son of man, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him"**). The lesson to take with us, as we approach Holy Week, is that the way to the glory of God is through the humility of the Cross.

SAINT MARY OF EGYPT FOR US



On the Fifth Sunday of Lent we remember Saint Mary of Egypt. In the Canon of St. Andrew she is presented as a model of repentance for all. For many years, she lived a life of bondage to sexual passions. She lost her virginity at age twelve, ran away from home, and, for the next seventeen years, was a slave to her insatiable appetite for sexual perversions, including encounters with “young men,” even against their will. This sounds very much like a victim of pedophilia who recoils and continues in her victimization by taking on the role of a predator herself, victimizing others in the process. Many who fall into such sexual bondage are victims of sexual abuse as children. In a futile attempt to soothe the horror of their own victimization, they try to regain control of their lives through exploitation, continuing to inflict wounds on their own souls and bodies.

“I confess to Thee, O Savior, the sins I have committed, the wounds of my soul and body, which murderous thoughts, like thieves, have inflicted inwardly on me”; Like David, I have fallen into lust and I am covered in filth; but wash me clean, O Savior, by my tears.” (Great Canon, Canticle 2, v. 12, 54.)

Even though this lifestyle isolated her from the Church, her heart yet longed for union with God. She joined a crowd of pilgrims to Jerusalem; once there, she wanted to enter the church. But she understood that her sins were preventing her from entering communion with God. Her healing was neither immediate nor easy, but required a rigorous and lengthy spiritual journey. Led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, she lived there as a hermit, seeking freedom from bondage of the passions and nearness to God. After many years, God arranged for St. Zosimas, a priest, to encounter her. Even though Mother Mary was now spiritually whole (and would even walk on water!), she was in need of receiving Holy Communion. As for the priest, he needed to learn about humility and repentance and the grace of God.

Let us remember Saint Mary of Egypt and her wonderful redemption. During the remainder of this Lenten journey, may we pray to be freed from our imprisonment to the passions that enslave us--whatever these passions may be in our case--and taste of repentance, humility, and God's love for us.

*Having been a sinful woman, you became through repentance a Bride of Christ.
Having attained angelic life, you defeated demons with the weapon of the Cross;
Therefore, O most glorious Mary, you are a Bride of the Kingdom! (Kontakion: Tone 3)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LAST WEEK OF LENT

- **Wednesday, April 17: Liturgy of Pre-Sanctified Gifts: 6 PM at Sts Peter and Paul**
- **Friday, April 19: Compline with Canon for the Raising of Lazarus, 5 PM at Sts Peter and Paul**
- **Saturday, April 20: General Commemoration of All Departed (10 AM, at Saint Anthony's)**

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Ion, Marius & Katherine (Stan); Serbanescu and Becker families; Gabriel; Karen (Jane Best's daughter); Charitini; Sula; Stella & Dimitrios; Christine (Abraham); Dollie; Venetia; Maura; Ann; Ed, Peter, John, Jonathan and Joanna; Andrei; John, Janet, Christy (relatives of Jean); Stelian; Diane.
DEPARTED: Viorica; Norma; Miltiades; Tim (Becker); Silviu; Ross (Chrissi's friend); Richard Johns; Viorica; Bishop Antoun; Vito (DiPento); Jim and Marion (Raimondi); Stephanie (Yazge); Job; George (Georgiades); Abie (Abraham); Bill (Thomas).